

## [In the Hospital]

FOLKLORE

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NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Joseph Vogel

ADDRESS

DATE April 17, 1939

SUBJECT In the Hospital

1. Date and time of interview April 13, 1939 - 4P.M.
2. Place of interview Cafeteria, opposite Kings County Hospital
3. Name and address of informant I. Friedman, 968 Second Avenue New York City
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Joseph Vogel

ADDRESS

DATE April 17, 1939

SUBJECT In The Hospital LITTLE FLIES WITH A BIG BITE

People don't feel natural in a hospital. I mean the healthy ones. A man goes into a hospital, even if he's a tough guy, he keeps his tail between his legs. But a woman is different. You never know what a woman'll do. My wife's got 'em all best a mile. When she goes into a hospital it's like an epidemic got loose.

I once had kidney trouble. She made it ten times worse for me. The doctor said to drink a lot of water to flush my kidneys, so twenty times a day my wife brought me orange juice, prune juice, grape juice, lemon juice. "Here, drink, flush out the kidneys."

"If you want to drown me," I said, "throw me in the ocean."

My boy Irving got cramps. Any sensible person knows when you get cramps not to take a physic. You might have appendicitis and a physic, God forbid, can burst the appendix. But my wife stuffs everything in the medicine cabinet into the boy. Ex-lax, aspirin, mineral oil, even coughing syrup. Anything to loosen him up.

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"He's only got a cramp," I told her. "Have pity on him."

It turned out, though, that he had appendicitis.

The doctor said the best thing is to operate right away.

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No use taking any chances with appendicitis, especially a child. All right, if it doesn't do any good and can do you harm, then take it out.

My wife began dying on the spot. She couldn't wait till we got to the hospital. She tore her hair out of her head. "Oye, I'm dying, I'm dying."

All right, call a taxi and we'll take the boy to the hospital.

The doctor carried the boy down to a cab, and I — I carried down my wife.

When we got to the hospital they took my boy to the operating room, I had my hands full with my wife. "For God's sake behave yourself," I said. "It's a hospital."

You never saw anything like it. My wife ran around crying you could hear her a mile outside. The nurses came over and reasoned with her. It's not so serious an appendix operation. They operate on hundreds cases and nothing happens. But try argue with my wife. "They're killing him," she runs around crying. In a hospital, mine you, she runs around crying, "They're killing him."

"Quiet, for God's sake," I told her. "People are sick. Respect other people."

So instead of being quiet she runs over to everybody who comes into the hospital and grabs them around. "My boy is on the operating table," she tells everybody. "They're cutting him out his appendix. They're cutting him out his life."

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And all of a sudden she drops down on the marble floor. What happened? She fainted.

From then on it became quiet.

In twenty minutes it was all over and the doctor came downstairs. "You see how swollen it is?" He showed the appendix. "It's a good thing we operated right away. An emergency case."

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It cost me two hundred dollars.

Day and night my wife stayed in the hospital. You couldn't drag her away from Irving's room. She had to watch.

Watch what?

Watch?

She gave them there all apoplexy. "Doctor, maybe it's too cold with the window open?" "Doctor, maybe it's too hot with the window closed?" "Doctor, maybe the bed is tipped too much up?"

Then the boy begins feeling better, she begins paying attention to the other sick ones. She goes from one to the other, giving advice, complaining against the nurses — in one week she knows every case in the hospital.

She knows what's wrong with everybody and everything. She becomes the chief complainer.

Across the street there was sand. Little flies came in through the windows, sand flies. Like my wife said: "Little flies with a big bite." She complained to the doctors, even to the superintendant. They didn't do nothing to stop the flies, so my wife brings a fly swatter to

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the hospital to keep the flies off Irving. But that's not enough. She runs into the next room and swats the flies over somebody else's head.

I'm ashamed to show my face inside a hospital from then on.

Today, I wanted to visit my friend in Kings County Hospital, I sneaked away from my wife. I'm not taking any more chances.